

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a brick building with large, multi-paned windows. The words "NORTH SAINT PAUL" are visible in large, white, sans-serif capital letters along the top edge of the building's facade. The image is slightly faded to allow the text to be legible.

# Envision North St. Paul

**Engaging Underrepresented Participants  
In Response to the Request By the City of North Saint Paul**

**Fall 2013**

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**HUMPHREY SCHOOL  
OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**  
**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**  
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December 3, 2013

Paul Ammerman  
Community Development Director  
2400 Margaret Street  
St. Paul, MN 55109

Dear Mr. Ammerman:

Diversity Consulting Firm is pleased to submit our Response to your Request for Proposals to engage underrepresented groups in the City of North St. Paul.

As one of the premier community development consulting firms in the Twin Cities, our experience tells us that a community-driven approach to visioning builds trust and establishes long-term relationships among previously underrepresented communities. Please find enclosed a proposal for a visioning process that is innovative, community-driven, context-specific, flexible, and affordable. As a Twin Cities based firm, we have worked with cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul to develop innovative tools to engage diverse stakeholders in their planning and participation processes. We have experience in working with people of all ages, needs, experiences and difficulties to ensure that everyone is able to have a voice and make a difference in planning outcomes. The proposed engagement techniques and work program will establish trust and form long-lasting relationships by building consensus around ideas brought to the table by the real experts—North St. Paul's own community members. This will take a lot of hard work—both on your part and ours—but we will be sure to make the process as fun and engaging as possible for everyone involved in order to ensure the best possible outcomes.

We are excited about the opportunity to work with the City of North St. Paul to enhance the participation techniques used to engage underrepresented groups in the Envision North St. Paul process. Please let us know if you need additional information or have any questions about our team or our response to your Request for Proposals.

Sincerely,

Suado Abdi  
Wesley Johnson  
Tony Damiano  
David Kowen

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# Background and Demographics

North Saint Paul is a city located to the northeast of Saint Paul, Minnesota. Comprising approximately three square miles, the city was home to 11,694 people as of 2012. North St. Paul has undergone some dramatic demographic changes since the 2000 census. Over the time period from 2000 to 2012, the age distribution has shifted toward an older demographic. The population over age 45 grew by 17%, and the population under age 18 decreased by 17% over this time period. Even more dramatic shifts have taken place in racial composition. In 2000, the non-white population was 852, and In 2012 it was 2392. This 181% increase in minority population includes a 208% increase in the African American population, from 313 to 964, and a 295% increase in the Asian population, from 201 to 793. Residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino increased by 93% from 281 to 541 over the same period (US Census Bureau 2013).

While it can be difficult to tease out accurate information on specific ethnicities from census data, anecdotal evidence from interviews with North St. Paul officials suggests that immigrants of Hmong and African descent have contributed a portion of the changes in racial demographics. Census data confirm that the number of foreign born residents has increased by 100% from 536 to 1,031 between 2000 and 2012, and 37% of the 2012 foreign-born population entered the United States in year 2000 or later. Census data further confirm that 30% of foreign-born residents living in North St. Paul in 2012 were born in South Eastern Asia (potentially of Hmong descent), and an additional 29% of foreign born residents were from African countries. Accompanying these many demographic shifts has been a dramatic decrease in median household income from \$70,418 to \$54,155 in 2012 (2012 inflation-adjusted dollars) (US Census Bureau 2013).

Given the dramatic changes in age, race, ethnicity, immigration status, and income over the past 12 years, the City of North St. Paul must work diligently to build relationships with new residents, understand their concerns, and work with them to create a shared vision for the future. A visioning process which builds consensus for future action among all residents can contribute to community capacity by establishing long-lasting relationships with diverse members of the population.





# Purpose

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The purpose of the Envision North St. Paul planning process is to build community capacity while engaging groups of people who have been historically under-represented in North St. Paul planning processes. Although the specific proposal is for a visioning process, the general framework and menu of engagement options are drawn from best practices which have been shown to successfully engage diverse populations in meaningful ways in many different contexts and types of planning processes. We have tailored these techniques so that they are sensitive to the existing geography, demographics, resources, and capacity of North St. Paul.

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## Goals

Based on the consultant team's expertise and the challenges highlighted by the RFP and by North St. Paul staff, we propose strategies that work to meet six participation-related goals:

### Goals

1. To identify and connect with under-represented groups in North-St. Paul
2. To build long-lasting, sustainable connections between under-represented groups and the city of North St. Paul
3. To create forums for collaborative decisionmaking that empower stakeholders to have a greater voice in the democratic process
4. To connect new communities with long-time, established residents and institutions
5. To maintain a high level of engagement over time
6. To draw on community understanding and expertise to guide North St. Paul's vision

We employ a variety of strategies at different phases of the process in order to achieve these goals. Figure 1 summarizes our proposed strategies as they apply to each goal.



# Figure 1: Summary of Goals + Strategies

Goal	Stakeholder ID	Trusted Advocates	Study Circles	Listening Sessions	Visioning Workshops	Open Houses	Consensus Building	Community Action Plans	Technology
ID and Connect with Underrepresented Groups	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Build Durable and Sustainable Connections		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Create Forums for Collaborative Decisionmaking			X		X	X	X	X	X
Connect New Communities to Established Residents		X		X	X	X	X		X
Maintain a High Level of Engagement		X	X				X	X	X
Draw on Community Understanding	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

# Approach

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Visioning is a tool that can be used to build consensus around a shared future that the community wants to achieve. Successful visioning processes identify community assets, assess options and opportunities, engage the public early and often, and rely on shared values rather than on the grand plans of a few people (Haines 2001). While our approach relies heavily on engaging the knowledge of local residents to build consensus, we also recognize that compromise and expert knowledge, when used in the right way, can help move visioning processes toward outcomes that are action-oriented and realistic (Helling 1998).

In order to address these challenges, we always begin with stakeholder identification and an extensive, community-driven identification of issues, assets, and opportunities. A unique aspect of this proposal will be to engage trusted advocates within underrepresented populations in order to establish long-term relationships within those communities. Our process leverages the latest in internet and information technology to provide enhanced opportunities for feedback, analysis, and transparency. Finally, the structure of our proposed public meetings, workshops, and committees are designed to strike a balance between the need for expert knowledge and analysis, community consensus, and key compromises where necessary to move the process forward.

The result of Envision North St. Paul will be more than a shared vision for the community. Our process will build the community capacity and feedback mechanisms necessary to achieve the vision. Community capacity is generally defined as the interaction of various human, organizational, and social resources to solve problems that improves the well-being of the community (Chaskin et al. 2001). Our proposed process will build community capacity in North St. Paul by identifying new human resources (underrepresented populations), engaging people in a way that builds interpersonal and interorganizational networks, building commitment and good-will among participants and community members, empowering people to solve problems, and increasing access to information and resources within the community.





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# Response to Request for Proposals

Below, we briefly outline the ways in which our team will respond to the project specifications of the RFP.

1. **Develop and implement a toolkit that can be used in developing a community-wide vision document:** This proposal constitutes an array of tools that can be used to develop an action-oriented, context-specific vision. While we may not use every tool suggested in this document, we will tailor our approach as we move forward in order to meet the needs of the community as those needs arise through our bottom up approach.
2. **Facilitate participation of residents who have not been represented in previous planning efforts:** One of the major challenges mentioned by North St. Paul staff in preliminary conversations was that there has been an influx of new types of residents, yet there are not relationships established with them yet. By identifying trusted advocates within new and underrepresented communities, and engaging those advocates in study circle formation, community meetings, and culturally-appropriate outreach, we hope to establish new relationships that build community capacity for the long-term.
3. **Propose a timeline and schedule for completion of each element of the participation process:** Our team proposes a specific one-year timeline which can be found within the Work Program section of this document. A one-year timeline is necessary in order to provide ample opportunity for stakeholder identification and community-driven decisionmaking. Note that our consensus-building approach does carry some risk of missing timeline targets toward the end of the process. However, we believe that this approach is necessary in order to effectively establish long-term trust among new residents and new participants.
4. **Develop a series of public meetings that draw on community expertise and interest:** We employ a variety of public meeting and workshop techniques designed to begin with the knowledge and expertise that community members have. Our approach is tailored specifically to the characteristics of the North St. Paul community. Our team is experienced with a wide array of techniques which can be modified throughout the process in order to remain responsive to the issues and opportunities identified by the community in the early phases of the process.
5. **Maintain a high level of public involvement:** Our process utilizes trusted advocates, information technology, and a healthy dose of fun in order to build trust and commitment, maintain transparency, provide opportunities for all types of people to participate, and keep people engaged. Our community-based action plans are designed to leverage the relationships built during the visioning process to continue public involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the vision long after the visioning process is finished.

# Response to Request for Proposals

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6. **Context driven solutions and consistency with North St. Paul's characteristics:** Since the task at hand is to engage community members which have been previously underrepresented, our team comes to the table with very few assumptions about who will be engaged or what issues will be brought to the table. Our extensive stakeholder identification process and bottom-up approach to engagement will allow us to tailor our workshops and techniques to cater specifically to the needs that the community identifies. In addition, because of North St. Paul's relatively small size, we do not propose an overly-complex organizational structure for this process. In order to be nimble and responsive, only two formal committees will be established in order to guide decisionmaking and negotiate any necessary compromises. Other less formal committees and workgroups (study circles) will be established based on the specific interests identified by trusted advocates and during listening sessions and workshops. Finally, our team will work through trusted advocates and study circles to establish community-specific action plans which will meet the needs and leverage the unique resources of individual stakeholder groups and communities.

7. **Innovative ideas:** Because our approach is flexible and context-specific, our team will be able to utilize our knowledge and experience to recommend creative and innovative applications of techniques that have been used successfully in other communities. No two participation processes or communities are alike, but we can still tailor tried and true techniques to the needs of the North St. Paul community.

8. **Relevance to community members and stakeholders:** In addition to points already mentioned above, our thematic workshops will be individually tailored to meet the community needs identified early on in the process. For example, if community members identify during listening sessions that downtown redevelopment is of primary importance, then downtown redevelopment and design can become a theme of one of our workshop tracks.

9. **Ability to actively engage across the community:** Our process will come to the people rather than the people having to come to the city. By establishing trusted advocates within specific communities, and holding workshops, open houses, and listening sessions in targeted locations across the community, we will be able to directly engage those who have not been well represented in past processes. Our techniques will be varied, and will infuse fun and entertainment wherever possible to keep people actively engaged in producing a vision.



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# Stakeholder Analysis

We begin to identify who the stakeholders will be toward the very beginning of the process. As the purpose of the Envision North St. Paul planning process is to build community capacity, we see stakeholders as a crucial component to the planning process. As community members are experts of their community, we envision the planning and participation process to be a stakeholder driven process. We want these individuals to inform both the decision-making process and guide the process to ensure it is transparent and collaborative among diverse groups.



Bryson (2004) argues, “Stakeholder analyses are now arguably more important than ever because of the increasingly interconnected nature of the world.” Increasingly there is a demand to convene negotiating groups to reach consensus on solutions to community problems. These groups are made up of stakeholders—those segments of the community that are affected by or have a “stake” in the decision: citizen groups, funding sources, service providers, government regulators, advocate groups, and consumers. Involvement in the community problem-solving processes is important for several reasons:

- To assure that the decision addresses as many different stakeholder interests as possible;
- To increase the probability of a creative outcome;
- To build broad-based support for the decision made by the negotiating group; and
- To facilitate implementation of the decision.

Based on our research, we found that neighborhood associations, youth-serving and community organizations, churches, non-Profits, schools, businesses, government, multi-family housing, law enforcement, and concerned residents who collaborate to ensure the safety, sustainability and quality of their neighborhoods can be potential stakeholders in the City of North St. Paul.

# Stakeholder Analysis

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## **Benefits of Engaging Diverse Stakeholders**

By soliciting the opinions, interests, concerns and priorities of stakeholders early in the evaluation process, the results are more likely to address stakeholders' specific information needs and be useful for a range of purposes such as affecting policy decisions. By including stakeholders from diverse backgrounds—cultural, racial, ethnic, geographic, political, organizational and linguistic—we will have a comprehensive representation of the demographics of the city. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders in the planning process also provides opportunities build social capital, build community capacity and develop consensus around a vision. The recommendations that result from a process that includes diverse stakeholders are more likely to implemented more fully and with less resistance from other community members. Engaging stakeholders in the participation process also serves to support and reinforce the relationship between City of North St. Paul and community groups in the planning process.

## **Ensures Transparency**

To establish the credibility of Envision North St. Paul, the participation process should be seen as honest and transparent. Including a broad range of perspectives communicates openness to others' ideas and experiences. This also provides stakeholders with an opportunity to raise objections or issues early in the evaluation process. Consulting with stakeholders establishes a forum for honest communication, increases the transparency of the process, and provides an opportunity for stakeholders to voice and clarify any misconceptions they may have.

## **Fostering Relationships and Collaboration**

When stakeholders have opportunities to meet one another as part of the community engagement process, they are able to share their interests, experiences and program and content knowledge. As a result, stronger networks of those working on similar social programs/goals are enhanced. These connections will be important to identify Trusted Advocates and recruit communities groups that are marginalized in the City.

## **Roles of Stakeholders in the Planning Participation Process**

Figure 2 identifies potential stakeholders based on existing community organizations working within the City of North St. Paul. Based on the list from this table, we can begin by identifying specific groups and individuals that will be involved in the stakeholder identification process and in the broader Envision North St. Paul process.

## Figure 2: Potential Stakeholder Groups in the City of North St. Paul

Public and Private Institutions	Organizations in North St. Paul	Individuals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· City of North St. Paul</li> <li>· North High School</li> <li>· Cowern Elementary</li> <li>· Richardson Elementary</li> <li>· L.C Webster Elementary</li> <li>· St. Peter Catholic School</li> <li>· Christ Evangelical Lutheran School</li> <li>· Library-Ramsey County, North St. Paul Branch</li> <li>· River of God Church</li> <li>· Community of Christ</li> <li>· North Haven Church</li> <li>· St. Peter's Catholic Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Neighborhood Watch</li> <li>· Police &amp; Fire Department</li> <li>· Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)</li> <li>· North St. Paul Area Food-shelf</li> <li>· Store to Door</li> <li>· North St. Paul Historical Society &amp; Museum</li> <li>· Museum of Boy Scouts &amp; Girl Scouts</li> <li>· North St. Paul Green</li> <li>· Merrick Inc.</li> <li>· Rotary Club of North St. Paul, Maplewood, &amp; Oakdale</li> <li>· The Toy Shelf, Inc.</li> <li>· American Legion Post 39 (Seniors)</li> <li>· Veterans of Foreign Wars 1350 (Seniors)</li> <li>· Businesses</li> <li>· Rem Ramsey</li> <li>· North St. Paul Workforce Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Renters</li> <li>· Immigrants</li> <li>· Students</li> <li>· Residents</li> <li>· Employees</li> <li>· Seniors</li> <li>· Unemployed Individuals</li> <li>· Low Income Individuals</li> <li>· Bilinguals</li> <li>· Residents</li> <li>· African Americans</li> <li>· Asians</li> <li>· People of African Descent</li> <li>· Business Owners</li> <li>· People with Disabilities</li> </ul>





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# Stakeholder Analysis

The table above provides a starting point by identifying groups of stakeholders that could inform the process regarding decisions or policies that affect them. These groups will be convened to solicit input and make decisions in the stakeholder identification process. Representatives from these organizations and institutions should be able to point our team in the direction of underrepresented groups as well as participate in Envision North St. Paul on behalf of their own interests. Because all the stakeholders work, live, or play in the City of North St. Paul, their input to the planning process is important to build consensus among different groups in the City.

Considering the diversity of potential stakeholders, input to the process will be solicited in a variety of ways: public meetings, interactive workshops, surveys, focus groups held in neighborhoods, and a web page that allows the public to make comments. The purpose here is to ensure there is broad engagement, transparency, and consensus regarding the vision produced by Envision North St. Paul. To ensure there is a fair collaborative process, the composition of stakeholder groups will be very important. There may be tensions in the community between the desire to include everyone who wants to be at the table and the need to have a group that is a reasonably sized for decision-making.

*“The purpose here is to ensure there is broad engagement, transparency, and consensus regarding the vision produced by Envision North St. Paul.”*





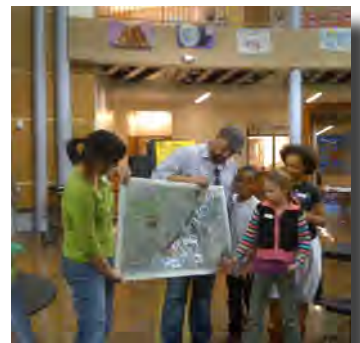
# Stakeholder Analysis

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## Stakeholder Identification Timeline

During the two-month stakeholder identification period, we begin with stakeholder identification workshops to sort groups and individuals and educate interested parties about the purpose and goals of Envision North St. Paul. Having established who the stakeholders are by the end of the second month, we will form two committees: the Executive Committee and Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Both of these two committees will be comprised of eight to ten community members. The community advisory committee will be responsible for setting and approving the executive committee agenda in order to ensure that decisions reflect the broad interests of the community. After we form the executive committee, we will ask the members to elect a chair. This elected chair will also chair the CAC. In order to ensure the representation of underrepresented groups, we will strongly encourage trusted advocates from underrepresented communities to serve on either the CAC or Executive Committee. Specific groups and individuals to consider for the two committees include:

- Neighborhood representatives
- Business owners/representatives.
- Community group/organization directors/representatives.
- City representatives
- Trusted Advocates

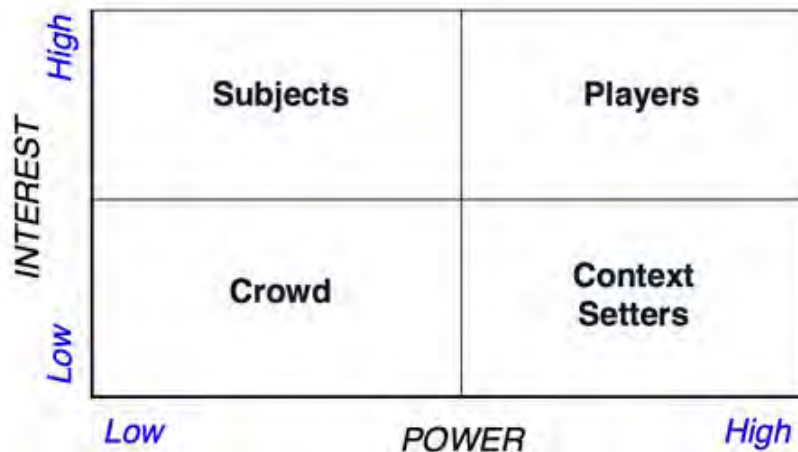


## Maintaining a Balance of Interests

Considering the diverse representation of stakeholders, we must work to maintain a balance of the different interest groups. Power versus interest grids (Figure 3) will allow us to categorize stakeholders into four categories to ensure there is a balance of power and interest among stakeholders. According to Bryson (2004), power versus interest grids help determine which players' interests and power bases must be taken into account in order to address the problem or issue at stake. Bryson states, "The knowledge gained from the use of a grid can be used to help advance the interests of the relatively powerless" (Bryson 2004).

- **Subjects:** Are those who have an interest but with little power.
- **Players:** Are those who have both interest and significant power
- **Crowd:** Consists of stakeholders with little interest and power
- **Context Setters:** Are those who have power but will little direct interest

**Figure 3: Power Versus Interest Grid**



Source: Bryson (2004)

After the first month of the stakeholder identification process, we begin by articulating how stakeholders fit within the power versus interest grid. This will allow us to begin recruiting trusted advocates and identifying potential members of the Executive Committee and CAC. During the second month, we begin to formulate citywide representative stakeholders. Figure 4 below shows the goals and actions certain stakeholders will do to ensure the visioning process is inclusive and representative of the community.

# Stakeholder Analysis

**Figure 4: Forming Stakeholder Groups**

Stakeholders	Goals	Actions
Consultant Team	Engage and guide stakeholders through a valuable planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide planning and strategies to information and expert guidance to facilitate planning including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Budgeting / cost estimating,</li> <li>○ Operational planning</li> <li>○ Service design</li> <li>○ Branding</li> <li>○ Engagement / facilitating, and communications</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
City Staff	Ensure the project outcomes align with and/or advance the City's mission, plans for the visioning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide oversight and key directions</li> <li>● Input on programming and design of planning and participation processes</li> <li>● Approve overall schedule and budget, and staffing and resources to operate the visioning process</li> <li>● Address issues and changes throughout planning process</li> </ul>
Executive Committee and Community Advisory Committee	Through oversight and management, enable project stakeholders to ensure their roles and responsibilities match the visioning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide ongoing input and direction while serving as the central aggregator of information and input on-campus</li> <li>● Connect project stakeholders, and act as project representatives to other groups on and externally.</li> <li>● Guide staffing and resourcing decisions.</li> </ul>
Community Groups and Leaders	Provide input from additional perspectives to ensure the visioning process is collaborative and consensus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide input from an outside perspective to ensure project develops based on best practices and in alignment with larger plans and institutional aspirations.</li> </ul>
Trusted Advocates and Other Underrepresented Groups	Ensure they are represented in the visioning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide input from personal perspectives</li> <li>● Serve as representative to ensure there is input from the point of view of other underrepresented groups in the city</li> <li>● Hold the consultants, committees, and City Staff responsible to ensure the visioning process is inclusive of underrepresented groups</li> </ul>

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# Stakeholder Analysis

## Alternative Community Stakeholder Collaborative Process

Since not all stakeholders may want to be at the negotiating table, it is important to provide alternative ways for them to participate. We envision there will be variations in the degree of involvement in the process desired by stakeholders. These differences could be related to such things as differences in the kind of impact the decision will have on stakeholders, the time they have available to participate in the process, or perceived threats or advantages related to a decision. Making different roles in the process available can be an effective strategy for involving people who will not be at the table, but want to be involved in the process. In some kinds of collaborative processes, different stakeholders may be involved at different levels:

- An observer of the process;
- Providing input to a representative who is seated at the negotiating table
- Providing input in written form or at a public meeting



# Trusted Advocates

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## Trusted Advocate Model

Having established who our stakeholders are, the next step is to identify Trusted Advocates to engage communities that are marginalized in the planning and decision-making processes. A way to develop outreach without slowing down the process is to create trusted advocates from individual neighborhoods or organizations in the study area. Developing a network of trusted advocates that organize and represent their communities will bridge many trust issues that may exist among groups that have been previously underrepresented. Adapting the Trusted Advocate models utilized in other communities will provide a context-sensitive approach to increasing input from diverse communities and ensuring they have a greater voice in the visioning process. Furthermore, this approach will create the opportunities for the city to build long-term and sustainable relationships with all communities in the city. This model will be instrumental for city government to rebuild trust among the neighborhoods by showing a commitment to partnership and implementation of Envision North St. Paul. Many underrepresented groups would feel frustration with insufficient communication between the neighborhoods and the city during the planning processes. The remainder of this section will describe the role of trusted advocates, how they should be trained, and how they will interface with other portions of Envision North St. Paul.

## Background

The Trusted Advocate model has been used successfully in Seattle WA, Oakland CA, and St. Paul MN. The model grew out of Former Mayor Greg Nickels' Race and Social Justice initiative (RSJI), which was an effort to change how the city government addressed the "needs of its racially, ethnically and culturally diverse population." As the City of St. Paul, Minnesota is preparing for the opening of the Green Line Light Rail Transit-way (LRT) in 2014, Metro Transit conducted a transit service study of the Central Corridor to integrate existing bus service with the future LRT. The District Council Collaborative of St. Paul and Minneapolis (DCC) partnered with Metro Transit to help support and enrich community engagement in the transit study process. The DCC implemented a Trusted Advocate pilot project that contracted with "proven" community organizers, advocates, and leaders of various communities. Through the pilot project, the DCC reported that over 1200 community members participated in trusted advocate engagement sessions. Through the trusted advocate process, 700 data points were collected. The significance of the pilot project the DCC implemented is that the advocates built relationships with community groups and individuals and developed a positive working relationship with Metro Transit staff (Transit, More than a Ride Trusted Advocate Pilot Project Interim Report, 2012).

## The Role of Trusted Advocates

A report by the DCC, which evaluated the trusted advocate pilot project, defined a trusted advocate as a “member of a specific ethnic, racial, cultural and/or other underrepresented group who is perceived by other members as trustworthy, approachable and effective, particularly navigating distance between the group and the majority community” (Transit, More than a Ride Trusted Advocate Pilot Project Evaluation, 2013). The evaluation report (2013) also stated that trusted advocates were chosen for “their existing ties to the community and evidence of their ability to build relationships and serve as bridges between governmental officials and neighborhood groups. The District Council Collaborative of St. Paul and Minneapolis indicated that a multicultural approach to building and sustaining resident involvement, the work of trusted advocates includes:

- Facilitating and organizing meetings,
- Community forums and strategy group participation
- Outreach and Interpretation
- Service Provision, Advocacy and Planning
- Systems and Policy Advocacy and Change

## Scope of Work

The role of trusted advocates in the Envision North St. Paul process is to do outreach in their respective communities. The scope of their work will include:

- Attend and complete training workshops
- Organize and facilitate engagement activities within his/her respective community
- Collect and document conversations and input in both traditional and creative ways
- Participate in periodic project evaluations with consultant team
- Attend regular project meetings with staff (may be up to per month)
- Offer input on the visioning process and draft plans and advocate for community interests
- Encourage community members to attend listening circles, open houses, workshops, information sessions, and social media postings



# Trusted Advocates

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## Adapting the Trusted Advocate Model as an Engagement Tool

The adoption of the trusted advocate model will involve collaboration among stakeholders in the City of North St. Paul for the visioning process of Envision North St. Paul. To ensure the model is effective for implementation, information sharing and training the different groups involved in the process will be crucial. For example, the trusted advocate pilot project in St. Paul required the DCC staff, the Metro Transit outreach coordinator, and senior planners assigned to the study to meet several times to adapt the model for transit service planning purposes. Metro Transit staff oriented the DCC staff to transit service planning: the different planning phases, information needs, and when community members can have the greatest impact on the process and decision-making. Both parties exchanged information about planning processes, tools, techniques, and resources to ensure successful community engagement take places. As we adopt the trusted advocate model for the City of North St. Paul, we will ensure the advocates are trained and kept up to date with latest information. The following will show how trusted advocates will interact with others who are involved in the Envision North St. Paul process.



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# Trusted Advocates

## City Staff & Other Stakeholders

- Would interact with the advocates throughout the project to receive first-hand information from the advocates and share with advocates their knowledge and experience.

## Consultant Team:

- We would attend staff meetings to provide progress updates, bring forward information gathered by the advocates, and share their insights of working with diverse communities.
- We would retain final decision-making authority regarding the selection of and the contract with the trusted advocates. We would work closely with stakeholders throughout the advocate selection process. As a third party entity, we would ensure the trusted advocate model is by partisan since the purpose of the model would ensure an inclusive process that builds trust and long-lasting relationship built between the City and its constituents.
- We would be responsible for addressing community concerns raised about the trusted advocate project. We would also consult with the stakeholders about the concerns as appropriate.
- As a consultant group, we would seek out the stakeholder's input into written materials and presentations about the trusted advocate project.

## Trusted Advocates

- Trusted Advocates themselves know best how to reach into their communities with which they are the closest. Therefore, the planning and engagement processes should be kept flexible and responsive.
- Trusted advocates would not work against the consultant group and the City's planning process. Instead, the advocates should encourage community members to participate and provide input in advocate led engagements as well as formal public meetings.
- Input into the planning process might take many forms. We would work with the advocates to synthesize and consolidate input so that our partners would be able to easily integrate the information into planning process.

# Trusted Advocates

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## Contracting Trusted Advocates & Funding

The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative (CCFC) funded the Trusted Advocate pilot project in St. Paul for \$75,000. The District Council Collaborative of St. Paul and Minneapolis identified nine community members with high transit literacy, transit ridership experience, and strong connections to underrepresented communities. Each of the nine trusted advocates was paid \$5,000 as a stipend for duration of the study. Of the \$75,000 amount for the study, \$45,000 was spent on paying the trusted advocates. The remaining \$30,000 was used for administrative and resources.

The cost of the trusted advocate must be balanced with its value and the unique needs of North St. Paul. Although the cost of the trusted advocate model is relatively high, we consider it to be a valuable investment in building long term community capacity and trust. The precedent set by the pilot project in the Central Corridor shows that \$5000 is an adequate stipend for trusted advocates. Given that the minority population of North St. Paul is smaller than in the Central Corridor, we project that five trusted advocates would be needed, totaling \$25,000. This would ensure the advocates are committed and are held accountable for their work. While the consultant team would be responsible for much of the communications with trusted advocates, we estimate that \$10,000 to \$15,000 in additional funding would be needed for resource materials, training, and support as advocates engage with their communities. Since the consultant team will be supervising the work the trusted advocates are doing, we will create a 11-month contract with them to ensure their participation over the life of the Envision North St. Paul process. The contract will highlight roles and responsibilities, methods of engagement, attendance of every community meeting, and translating when needed. The contract will also stipulate that the advocates be paid a pro-rated portion of their contract every three months to ensure they are continuously involved with the visioning process.



## Selection process

After going through the stakeholder identification process, we will be able to identify underrepresented groups and individuals that will serve as trusted advocates. We can target recruiting for trusted advocates based on the results from the power versus interest grid exercise. In order to balance out power dynamics, groups which have low levels of power will be explored further in order to identify trusted advocates to represent those groups and build connections with those communities.

The individuals chosen as trusted advocates would need to have strong connections with their communities and have the interest to advocate and educate their communities about Envision North St. Paul. We will work with organizations and institutions categorized as having low power in the planning process in order to begin identifying individual trusted advocates. Contacting these organizations will provide us feedback on how the trusted advocate model could be used and suggest which individuals from their community that would best fit the model. The desired qualifications of a trusted advocate include:

- Experience in organizing and advocacy
- Must live or work in the City of North St. Paul
- Have verifiable ties with community organizations or neighborhood groups
- Some of the advocates should fit the description of underrepresented groups in racially and socioeconomically
- Some of the trusted advocates should be bilingual to represent immigrants groups
- Knowledge of technological use such as facebook, twitter, blogging, etc
- Southeast Asian
- New Americans from Africa
- Black/African-American
- Latino
- Native American
- Persons of different abilities
- Low-Income families and individuals

The application process would take approximately two months for the candidates to submit their applications, be chosen and trained with the skills needed to ensure their success. Final selections would be recommended by the consultant team and chosen by the newly formed Executive Committee.

# Trusted Advocates

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## Training and Orientation

After the selection process is completed, the trusted advocates will be required to complete training and orientation hours in the content of visioning processes. In these sessions, the advocates will be briefed on the purpose of the study, planning principles and process, how planning decisions are made, and what the study would entail. Training and orienting the trusted advocate about the study will help them better engage their communities. Important factors to train the advocate about are:

- Data collection
- Engagement methods
- Documentation
- Developing a work plan

After the training process is completed each advocate will be asked to create a personal work plan, which would detail how they would reach out to their communities and outlining the resources they would need to complete the work. This will help us identify ways we could support the advocate either with more information or through resources. The advocates will also asked to develop target engagement goals, by indicating the number of contacts they believed they could reach and the number of engagement sessions they intended to conduct. These work plans will be used as tools to review completed work and to mark progress over the course of the study.



## Technology and Communications

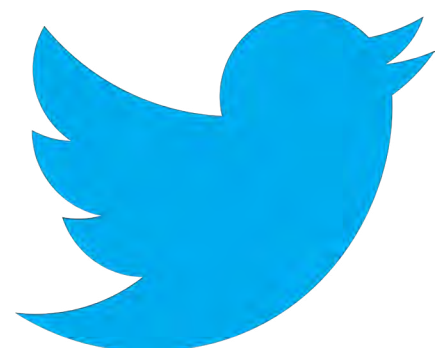
While trusted advocates form the backbone of our approach to building relationships with underrepresented communities in North St. Paul, an innovative communications program will be critical. We will leverage technological solutions in addition to traditional communications and outreach to ensuring transparency, provide opportunities for diverse people to be involved in the process, establish trust, and create long-term pathways of communication with the community.

### Why Technology?

Leveraging the power of the internet and social media is a key part of any modern participatory process. According to the Pew Center for the Internet and Public Life, 85% of adults use the internet on a regular basis (Zichuhr, 2013) and 72% use social networks (Brenner & Smith, 2013). Using social networks could be a particularly effective way to reach minority groups. As the Pew study points out, Hispanic and African-American adults are more likely than the general population to use social networks. It also reaches youth under 18 equally regardless of race or income (Brenner & Smith, 2013).

More than just creating a static web page, in order to take full advantage of modern technology, North Saint Paul needs to create dynamic, relevant and interactive ways to engage with the public. Even with very little resources, the City of North Saint Paul can take advantage of social networks like Facebook and Twitter to improve the participation process. Using established social networks lowers the barrier for participation since many people already use these accounts on a regular basis and are familiar with how to comment and interact.

Trusted Advocates can also be important resources to help bridge the digital divide with those who do not have access to the internet or those who do not feel comfortable posting comments online. Through Trusted Advocates outreach, we can gather comments and questions from residents and post on behalf of community members. Though a valuable resource, we should make clear that technology is not a substitute for personal engagement through meetings and one-on-one interactions.





# Technology

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## Solutions

There are a plethora of technology solutions available that seek to use the internet to enhance community engagement. An important question that needs to be asked is what is the purpose of the engagement? Largely speaking, out-of-the-box technology solutions fall into two broad categories: “Big Ideas” and “Fix-it” applications.

Big Ideas applications like “MindMixer” are, in essence, local social networks run by municipalities that ask users questions like “How can we make our streets more pedestrian-friendly?” or “What is your favorite part about visiting downtown?”. Sites like these have the advantage of being city-driven processes and thus the city can structure the conversation around specific issues where public participation could be advantageous. It is free for local residents to sign up and as people comment, different ideas can be voted up or down or commented on to allow city officials interact with the public and to facilitate further discussion among members of the public. An interesting feature of MindMixer is that the city can even post polls or sponsor problem solving challenges for prizes. For example “What should be done with the city owned property on Elm St.?”

Fix-it apps are useful because the concerns are all user-generated. Sites like Minneapolis’s See-Click-Fix online 311 system take specific complaints and questions from local residents, post them publicly and allow the city to provide feedback about resolving the issue. This could offer an important way to build trust between residents and city government. The downside is that, especially for a visioning process, the responses tend to focus more on small problems and tend to be negative in nature (ie. “Main Street is full of potholes”). The fact that this is completely user-driven also has its drawbacks since the city cannot set the context or push debate in a particular direction.

Both are important for visioning because even though the “fix-it” apps are generally focused on problems, if the city is able to respond in a timely fashion, it can be a conduit for on-going participation. If citizens, especially those from underrepresented groups who might be suspicious of government, see their specific concerns about potholes will be addressed, it can break down barriers and make these residents more likely to participate and see the value of long-range planning processes.

“Sites like these have the advantage of being city-driven processes and thus the city can structure the conversation around specific issues where public participation could be advantageous.”

## Low-Budget

Solutions like MindMixer and See-Click-Fix can be expensive, especially for a small city like North Saint Paul, but there are many low-cost ways for us to partner with the city to use technology in the participation process. In this type of scenario we would use Facebook and Twitter as platforms to interact with the public. Both are ubiquitous social networks that have a low-barrier to entry, have mobile platforms and (twitter especially) can be used semi-anonymously.

We would use twitter hashtags as both a “fix it” tool as well as a “Big Ideas” tool. Through the planning process website, as well as by word of mouth by our Trusted Advocates, we would establish a hashtag like #FixItNSP to track resident comments about the built environment. Working with city officials we would monitor the twitter feed, respond to posts and aggregate comments into weekly or monthly digests summarizing interesting and important posts. This shows a level of responsiveness and trust by the city which could build the support of under-represented groups for longer-range planning issues.

Similarly we would work with the city to establish a vision oriented hashtag like #VisionNSP. The city could post weekly questions on its Facebook and Twitter feeds asking citizens for input on specific topics, such as: “What would you like to see on the vacant lot on Seppala Blvd?”

## Social Media in Action

The City of Ankeny Iowa was awarded the 24th annual national Savvy Awards Competition sponsored by the City-County Communications and Marketing Association (3CMA) in 2012 for its use of Facebook in its Virtual Town Hall Initiative.

During a contentious budgeting process, Ankeny made use of Facebook to engage the community about the process. City staff posted messages to the page before each meeting started stating the agenda. After each meeting key topics and questions were posted on the page for discussion. The end result was 6,000 page views and almost 100 comments in just a 3 month period (City of Ankeny website). People appreciated how the city was responsive to questions and seemed genuinely interested in getting feedback from the public. What made the system work was that the city responded to every comment and devoted significant staff time to answer questions posted by the public. Some comments from the city’s Facebook page include:

- ”First off, kudos to Ankeny for interacting with citizens on this page. It is greatly appreciated.”
- ”Thank you for the information, it’s very informative and straight forward...Thank you again for asking for citizen input!
- ”I look forward to [the City of Ankeny’s] continued comments on this and many other topics.”

# Technology

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## Communication Strategy

A comprehensive and effective communications strategy needs to be an all-of-the-above approach that includes social media, traditional media and person to person interactions. Communications need to happen often and on a predictable schedule as we move through the process. Suggestions about frequency and timing appear Figure 5 at the end of this section.

## Social Media

The specifics of the social media plan will be dictated in part by whether or not city officials decide to invest in an online feedback tool like SeeClickFix or MindMixer. That being said, regardless of any additional technology tools we can be sure that any participation strategy will include a website, email updates, a Facebook page and Twitter account.

A key component of an effective social media strategy is the use of a variety of media including pictures, info-graphics and video. We would work with staff to ensure that there is at least one person dedicated to taking pictures, documenting quotes from residents, and recording video during meetings. This can be posted following the meeting and can help demystify the meeting process for those who may be reluctant to attend.

Posts do not have to be exclusively about the visioning process. Social media can also be a great platform to spread information about other community events, history, and other topics relevant to city residents. The more types of information presented through social media, the more likely the city will be able to engage groups with a variety of interests.



*“Social media can also be a great platform to spread information about other community events, history, and other topics relevant to city residents.”*

## Traditional Media

Even with the rise of the internet and social media, traditional forms of media like flyers and mailings should be utilized as well especially as many of the groups that the city hopes to engage in this process may have less regular access to the internet. We would implement a traditional media strategy focused on distributing the following:

- flyers to important area businesses and institutions
- mailings through the municipal power company and
- press releases to local radio, television, and newspapers.

Though North Saint Paul is a smaller city, there is a bustling downtown, many schools, churches, and other institutions that are important meeting places where the city can post notices about upcoming events related to the planning process. In particular, we would focus more time and resources developing materials for use with underrepresented groups.

North Saint Paul has the unique asset of a municipal power company. This provides a near universal method for the city to disseminate information. The City already issues a monthly power newsletter and we could use that to discuss meeting and initiatives during the planning process. We received advice from Neng Lee from the Ramsey County Workforce Development Center in North Saint Paul. He recommended that if we wanted to reach Hmong immigrants that we should incorporate at least a few words from the Hmong language in order to draw attention to the messages and make them seem more personal.

This is another place where the Trusted Advocate program can step in. Professional translation services are expensive so it is important that Trusted Advocates have a working fluency in the language of their community. They could be responsible for ad hoc translation services or to at least verbally present important information to stakeholders with low English proficiency.

## In-Person

Especially when many of the people who we hope to reach may be distrustful of government authority or have varying degrees of English literacy the importance of personal interaction cannot be understated. That's why we place so much emphasis on the Trusted Advocates program as a way to connect with underrepresented groups.

Trusted Advocates would be responsible for activating their social networks to increase turnout at public meetings and to hold informal meetings in more comfortable settings. They can give the meetings legitimacy and be a resource for the city to provide more relevant and culturally appropriate ways to interact with underrepresented groups.

**Figure 5: Communication Strategies, Techniques, and Timing**

Communication Strategy	Frequency of Updates	Key Points
Social Media: Facebook, Twitter & Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly updates throughout planning process</li> <li>• Before and after every event</li> <li>• Tweets, videos and photos during meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post questions and take advantage of commenting features</li> <li>• Make use of #hashtags to track comments</li> <li>• Post links to website for full documents and calendar of events</li> <li>• Use pictures and video where appropriate</li> </ul>
Traditional Media: Flyers, Utility bill notices, & press releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flyers should go out at least a week before meetings</li> <li>• Press releases should go out before and after important meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special emphasis need to be placed reaching out to minority-owned businesses</li> <li>• Flyer delivery should be in person to improve turnout</li> </ul>
Face-to-face: Trusted Advocates, Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As often as possible</li> <li>• Especially around plan approval</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-to-one communication should focus on key stakeholders</li> <li>• Can help build trust with under-represented groups</li> </ul>

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# Meeting Techniques

## Introduction, Goals, and Challenges

As the core of the proposed Envision North St. Paul process, public meetings will build on our communications strategy to provide a variety of opportunities for the community to weigh in on the vision and engage in collaborative decision-making. The strategy outlined below reflects our commitment to ensuring a bottom-up, community-driven process that successfully builds relationships with new members of the North St. Paul community for the long-run. It is important to emphasize that our team is flexible and can adapt the techniques and meeting locations to the specific needs of the community as the process unfolds and evolves over time. Due to the changing demographics of North St. Paul, we have designed our public meetings to deal with several anticipated challenges, which our process addresses according to the chart in Figure 6. These techniques are based on best practices in engaging diverse and limited English proficiency populations, and will be used throughout our public meetings, even if not explicitly mentioned in the remainder of this text (FHWA 2006).

“The strategy outlined below reflects our commitment to ensuring a bottom-up, community-driven process that successfully builds relationships with new members of the North St. Paul community for the long-run.”





# Meeting Techniques

**Figure 6: Addressing Challenges to Engaging Diverse, Limited English Proficiency Participants (Source: FHWA, 2006)**

Challenge	Solutions
Limited English Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use Trusted advocates to spread the news about meetings via word of mouth</li> <li>● Trusted advocates from Somali, Hmong, and Hispanic communities will be present at every meeting.</li> <li>● Communications materials will be printed in multiple languages when possible</li> <li>● Train facilitators to look for signs of illiteracy among participants</li> <li>● Provide multiple formats for engagement</li> <li>● Play games that do not rely on the English language</li> <li>● Use color coding and other visual cues to communicate key ideas and categories of ideas</li> </ul>
Cultural Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trusted advocates attend every meeting</li> <li>● Purchase locally sourced, culturally appropriate food</li> <li>● Utilize trusted advocates to seek out community leaders to participate in meetings</li> <li>● Hold meetings at locations popular with underrepresented groups, such as churches or housing complexes. Avoid holding meetings in government buildings</li> <li>● Form alliances with key organizations, such as the Work force Development Center, to assist in spreading the word to underrepresented groups</li> </ul>
Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Always provide an opportunity for free childcare at meetings, especially in the evenings.</li> <li>● Make sure that evening meetings are finished by 8:00 PM to allow families to get their children home</li> <li>● Make key meetings family friendly to allow children to participate when a fun activity is included.</li> <li>● Utilize trusted advocates and online tools to provide feed back opportunities that do not require meeting attendance.</li> </ul>

Table Continued on Next Page

# Meeting Techniques

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**Figure 6: Addressing Challenges to Engaging Diverse, Limited English Proficiency Participants Continued**

Transportation and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hold meetings within specific communities at meeting locations such as churches or housing complexes where people will already be present</li><li>● Use online tools to collect feedback from people who can not attend meetings</li><li>● Hold small meetings in peoples' homes or in other community locations for those who do not feel comfortable attending large public meetings</li><li>● Hold some meetings near transit stops downtown</li></ul>
Work Schedules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hold meetings at different times of the day and different times of the week (and on weekends) to accommodate different work schedules</li><li>● Target specific locations such as major employers, churches, or schools to hold meetings where there will already be a supply of local resident participants</li></ul>
Few Established Lines of Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Utilize trusted advocates to create communications pathways</li><li>● Establish relationships with key organizations that have connections to Somali, Hmong, Hispanic, and other under represented groups.</li><li>● Establish relationships with social services providers in Ramsey County</li><li>● Use word of mouth to publicize efforts at existing meetings, such as church gatherings, school events, etc.</li><li>● Use technology solutions to create and maintain a network through which to communicate important information</li></ul>

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# Meeting Techniques

## Meeting Locations

Because one of our strategies is to hold public meetings in locations easily accessible, identifiable, and comfortable for a broad swath of the North St. Paul community, our team has compiled a list of potential meeting locations. We will be sure to review this list with stakeholders, the Executive Committee, and the CAC in order to refine it. We will try to avoid meetings at city-operated facilities in order to make participation less intimidating.

- North High School
- American Legion
- North Star Museum of Boy Scouting and Girl Scouting
- River of God Church
- St. Peter's Catholic Church
- North Presbyterian Church
- Ramsey County North St. Paul Workforce Center
- Locations specifically identified by Trusted Advocates
- North Haven Church
- Parkside Apartments
- Regency Park Apartments
- Cedarview Commons
- 7th Avenue Apartments
- Under-utilized buildings or spaces identified as a component of the vision



# Meeting Techniques

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## Open Houses

As an engagement strategy and typology, the open house has long been a useful tool for planners and consultants working to encourage public participation, engage the underrepresented, and facilitate the creation of healthy and productive avenues of communication. Open Houses in North Saint Paul will be a key asset when working to engage local stakeholders in the visioning plan process and can also assist in building dynamic long-term relationships between stakeholders, local leaders, and City planners. Essential to the success of these meetings are the times in which they are held (both time of day and stage within the overall planning process), the location at which they occur, and the materials and agenda covered. Open houses are tailored stakeholders and are intentionally designed to make all feel welcome, safe, and important.

## Timing Is Everything

Open Houses held in North Saint Paul must be accessible to as many stakeholders as possible and since accessibility means different things to different people it is very likely that no two open houses will be the same. This type of meeting is multifaceted in nature and due to the array of benefits it provides, open houses will be held throughout much of the planning process. Initially, these gatherings will be used to introduce stakeholders into the planning process in a relatively informal setting and allow all participants to meet with planners and consultants face to face. Further, by incorporating the initial gains made by the stakeholder identification process and the identification of trusted advocates, these early open house meetings will establish foundational relationships with local leaders and residents alike. Between four and six open houses will occur during this phase of the planning process and these gatherings will occur at different times of day and night in order to allow for people with differing schedules and responsibilities the opportunity to attend at least some of the scheduled meetings. One open house will likely occur on a weekday during the typical breakfast hour so members of the workforce can attend before work and parents can attend after their children have gone to school. Other meetings will occur during the lunch hour and immediately after school and work has concluded for the day. Still other open houses will be conducted later in the evening, providing an opportunity for community members to attend who have free time during this portion of the day. Finally, at least one such gathering will occur on a Saturday for those whose schedules preclude them from attending during the week. While stakeholders can always reach out to planners and consultants outside of these open houses, attendance is highly encouraged and in some cases incentivized. By holding open houses throughout the visioning process and by conducting these meetings at differing times of day and night the greatest potential of stakeholder engagement can be achieved.

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# Meeting Techniques

## Location, Location, Location

Just as the designated timing of these open houses will fluctuate, so too will the location of these meetings in an attempt to engage as many stakeholders as possible. Typically, such open houses will rotate between two and four locations depending on availability and feedback received from trusted advocates as well as stakeholders themselves. The intention is to encourage engagement by removing (or minimizing) participation barriers such as transportation limitations and feelings of uneasiness related to meeting locations. Open houses should generally be well known community destinations, located along established transit routes, and have ample parking available. Figure 7 shows potential meeting locations in North St. Paul. These well known community institutions are accessible and conveniently distributed throughout the community. By alternating open house locations is also a good way to inspire committed stakeholders to travel within their own communities, meet new people, and ideally gain a new perspective of the neighborhoods that constitute North Saint Paul.

Proposed locations for these open houses should be able to comfortably enable the gathering of up to 100 people, tables, chairs, and the necessary informational materials. Further, stakeholders will not be asked to go needlessly out of their way to attend and such meetings will be held at local schools, churches, and community centers that equally accessible to all community members. Information regarding open house location, timing, and program will be distributed well in advance to allow community members and trusted advocates the necessary time to plan their attendance. This information will be provided on the City's website, within the periodical newsletter, and will also be advertised on social media outlets.



“Open houses should generally be well known community destinations, located along established transit routes, and have ample parking available.”

# Meeting Techniques

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## Format + Functionality

The format of these open houses will be informal compared to traditional planning meetings and no primary presentation will take place. Instead, stakeholders will be greeted at the door by one of the city planners and provided with informational pamphlets and brochures in a number of different languages. Also present, if possible, will be people willing and able to translate conversations between stakeholders and planners. While multilingual informational materials are essential so too is the opportunity for non-English speaking stakeholders to ask questions and comprehend to accompanying responses. Once inside participants will notice the room to be laid out in an inviting fashion allowing stakeholders to circulate at their convenience. Throughout the open house gathering space informational presentation boards will be displayed and each set of boards will be accompanied by a planner or consultant who will be able to answer the questions and respond to the concerns of all stakeholders. If available and applicable, informational videos and or digital presentations will also be presented. While the actual material presented at a given open house will change based on the current stage of the planning process the format and designed functionality will remain consistent to provide stakeholders a sense of comfort when attending multiple gatherings.

Typically such meetings will last for 2-3 hours allowing stakeholders to arrive and depart at will. Time appropriate beverages and food items will be provided to all in attendance and coffee will always be available regardless of time of day. Also, provided in multiple locations throughout the open house will be comment cards and potentially survey questionnaires and boxes of pens and pencils making it as easy as possible for those present to provide feedback on the visioning process, information regarding current personal concerns, or their thoughts on the meetings themselves. Comment cards can be anonymous or not as the stakeholder sees fit and upon completion comment cards and surveys will be deposited into collection boxes to be gathered by consultants at the conclusion of the open house.





## The Importance of Open Houses

As mentioned in the previous section, the specific agenda and program of each open house will fluctuate based on the current phase of the planning process and the goals planners and consultants have established for the particular meeting. The goals of engaging community members, established healthy and productive communication avenues and building trust with stakeholders will not waiver regardless of individual meeting aspirations or the present stage of the planning process. Encouraging participants to have one on one and small group interactions with city a planner serve the reciprocal purpose of providing stakeholder access to planners and simultaneously allows planners to get to know community members. Providing information to participants during these open houses is intended not only to inform stakeholders about the planning process but also to elicit their the personal responses and opinions of those living and working within the community. A positive externality of these interactions is the opportunity for community members to meet and interact with one another in a community building capacity that often does not exist outside of such gatherings. This development of social capital and the associated communal negotiations are essential to engaging all participants and have proven especially productive when attempting to engage underrepresented community members.

*“Encouraging participants to have one on one and small group interactions with city a planner serve the reciprocal purpose of providing stakeholder access to planners and simultaneously allows planners to get to know community members.”*

# Meeting Techniques

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## Listening Sessions

Listening sessions are where our bottom-up approach to public engagement really begins. A listening session is when our trained facilitators work with the identified trusted advocates and other key community contacts identified during the stakeholder identification phase to set up intimate meetings within specific communities with the goal of simply listening to the concerns and questions that the community has about the future of North St. Paul. This strategy has been used successfully by the Hope Community, a community development corporation serving diverse populations in the Phillips neighborhood in Minneapolis, to engage over 2000 people in small group discussions (Hope Community 2013).

Listening sessions allow participants to share their hopes, dreams, fears, and aspirations by telling stories that generate community dialogue about important issues and questions (Hope Community 2013). Very minimal information will be provided about the planning process during listening sessions, other than to indicate the broad goals of the Envision North St. Paul process and provide topics for discussion if none come to the forefront readily. Because residents are experts about their own communities, the purpose of the listening sessions are to allow them to own the process. In these sessions, the community talks while we as consultants and City staff listen. The dialogue generated during listening sessions will break through communication barriers and provide opportunities for building community capacity and trust. Considering that the stakeholders and trusted advocates are also involved in these listening sessions, we will build networks around mutual interest and opportunities. The importance of these sessions is that we will learn what matters to residents and inform them of our work. Through these sessions we hope to build social capital and community capacity with individuals and organizations.

The comments and conversations from listening sessions will be documented and posted online. They may be loaded into a word cloud or other dynamic technological solution depending on the capabilities of the technology that is selected by North St. Paul for this participation process. The comments will be organized and categorized by the consultant team and posted on the internet. The consultant team will work intimately with the Executive Committee to analyze the comments in relation to technical data to determine topics for the thematic workshops. Conversation can take place in any language. If conversation is in a non-English language, the trusted advocate will be responsible for translating comments after the meeting. Participant names and contact information will be recorded, and comments will be gleaned from the conversation. These conversations are critical in establishing the beginnings of long-term relationships within new communities. It is also important to understand what these listening sessions cannot be used for. Listening sessions cannot be set up as a debate or a decision making process. In addition, a listening session cannot take place at a focus groups and public hearing, where residents will not have complete freedom to share their thoughts.

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# Meeting Techniques

## Study Circles

Some issues may provoke particularly robust feedback from certain communities during listening sessions and open houses. When such issues or topic areas arise, the consultant team will work with community members and trusted advocates to provide more meaningful opportunities for engagement by establishing “Study Circles” that will pursue those topics in greater detail and work on solutions that can be explored by the broader community during the thematic workshops later in the process. The city of Kuna, Idaho has successfully used study circles to engage their community in banding together to solve problems and advocate for solutions. This has resulted in action-oriented ideas, improved communication between residents and city officials, and the engagement of diverse communities of people. The Kuna, Idaho study circles also included opportunities for high school students to engage in study circles. The Study Circles Resource Center advocates for the following guidelines (Faneslow 2004):

- Involve everyone and embrace diversity to share knowledge, resources, power, and decision making.
- Combine dialogue and decision-making to connect deliberative dialogue to social, political, and policy change
- Keep groups small, with 8-12 people in each study circle
- Meet several times for about two hours
- Each group has an impartial facilitator who manages the discussion and helps the group set its own ground rules
- Conversation begins with personal stories, brings in many different perspectives, explores solutions, and finally creates a plan for action and change.

Based on the best practices from the Study Circles Resource Center, it is possible to draw many connections between study circles and the goals of the Envision North St. Paul visioning process. Study circles fit within our community-driven approach to visioning. This is a technique that allows many types of people from diverse backgrounds to become part of the decisionmaking process in a meaningful way. Study circles have demonstrated in other communities such as Kuna, Idaho, that they are an effective means of generating robust feedback and excitement about being engaged in a decisionmaking process. Because study circles empower local residents to pursue their own ideas and create action-oriented strategies to achieve them, this will be a powerful technique in establishing long-term relationships with previously underrepresented groups of people in North St. Paul. Ultimately, study circles establish and build community capacity because they provide the framework necessary for local knowledge to be transformed into local decision making and problem solving.

Feedback and ideas gathered during the study circle sessions will be documented by the facilitators. Ideas and comments will be categorized into a database with other comments and ideas from the visioning process so that they can further inform the selection of themes and topics for the community workshops. Contact information will be retained for all study circle participants, and they will be invited to participate in the thematic workshops and other future events.

# Meeting Techniques

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## Thematic Workshops

Thematic workshops will be crafted based on an analysis of the feedback gathered during the open houses, listening sessions, study circles, and online engagement. We will work closely with the Executive Committee to decide on thematic topics, and will utilize technical data to supplement feedback from the community. In general, workshops are defined as targeted gatherings aimed at producing a product or completing a task (Creighton 2005). They are highly interactive and often involve building consensus to find agreement among stakeholders. The specific techniques used will vary based on the themes that are chosen. Some of the techniques discussed below do not typically fall into the “workshop” category, but could be used if additional information gathering or other tasks are determined necessary after the previous engagement efforts have taken place. Our philosophy is that participation should be active and fun whenever possible, and we infuse this philosophy into our workshops. Our workshops often contain the types of activities and components represented in Figure 8 below.



## Figure 7: Workshop Activities and Components

### Activity (Degree of Effort 1-5 Scale) - Description

#### **Design Charettes (5)**

An intensive problem-solving effort involving stakeholders to focus in on a single issue. If there are particular districts that the community feels need redevelopment, this technique may be appropriate in order to craft a concrete vision for an area. Often, charettes last multiple days. However, they can be modified to provide less specific outcomes if carried out over a day or two.

#### **City Walk (3)**

During a City Walk, a group of the community's leaders participate in an event where they re-experience part of the community by taking a walking tour. They follow a set of written instructions to do certain things while on the tour. Participants record their observations and discuss them at the end of the event. This technique could be used if the previous engagement efforts reveal a misunderstanding between residents and leaders in the community.

#### **Computer-Aided Negotiation (3)**

A variety of computer tools exist that allow us to model aspects of the community for use during workshops with community members. Other programs have been used to allow community members to build or interact with a virtual environment. This could be useful to a point, but likely only with the most savvy participants.

#### **Consensus Building (3)**

This technique is used if there are deeply seated disagreements between community members or groups of community members. Typically, this requires creating a panel of people who represent the various interests in the community.

#### **Facilitation (2)**

This is a style of meeting leadership that works well when there is a broad constituency which our team still needs to gather information from. Facilitation techniques vary widely and can be selected based on the issues and context.

#### **Future Search (5)**

This is a multi-day event that leads to the development of a common vision of the future. This technique could be used to engage a large number of people (up to 64) to craft a shared vision in a short amount of time. While the Future Search could be used to quickly assemble a vision at a relatively low cost, it may not provide the type of interactive, culturally sensitive process necessary to engage diverse participants. The level of effort on the participants' part is significant, as this is a multi-day event.

Table Continued on Next Page

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# Meeting Techniques

## **Keypad electronic voting and Groupware (3)**

This technique can be very successful because it utilizes technology to allow participants to provide instant feedback without having to disclose their identities. Other “groupware” can allow participants to quickly generate brainstorming ideas via laptops or other wirelessly connected devices. These techniques might be used to allow rapid-fire voting on identified potential solutions or elements of the vision (from study circles), or to quickly generate robust brainstorming data.

## **Participatory Rural Appraisal (2)**

A bundle of highly engaging techniques that are often effective in allowing groups of people who may struggle with English literacy to express their ideas and preferences. Techniques include interviews and discussions, mapping, ranking, and trend analysis. These are visual approaches which allow people to make a series of choices by pointing at, selecting, or drawing rather than expressing themselves with words or in writing.

## **Samoa Circle (3)**

The Samoa Circle technique is a facilitation method that allows intimate interaction to take place even within a larger group. It involves an inner circle of up to 5 or 6 chairs within a larger circle of chairs around the edge of the room. When a topic is announced, people move to the inner circle to discuss. Once someone has spoken, they return to the outer circle. The Samoa Circle is an excellent option for gaining robust feedback from large groups, and can be modified to be more or less specific depending on the issues and needs identified in earlier processes.

## **Spatial Allocation Games (3)**

Used to determine where future population growth will occur and what it will look like. These games require communities to make difficult choices about growth and development together, while having fun at the same time. The game might involve placing dots on a map to determine where future population growth will take place. Discussion would follow the exercise to gain consensus about a future vision for growth and development. Although North St. Paul is not a growing city, there are redevelopment plan. A modified version of such a game could be utilized to determine locations for infill development and redevelopment, transportation infrastructure, and other community needs.

## **Visioning Games (3)**

Games such as those utilized by planner James Rojas require communities to build their ideal community out of fun and interactive materials such as pipe cleaners, bouncy balls, and other objects. This exercise works well to engage participants who struggle with English literacy, and is appropriate for children and adults alike. These workshops have been described as being like a “family gathering.” The workshop can be modified to allow participants to design solutions to specific problems that have been identified. Some of these problems might be identified for the workshops via previous engagement efforts, or participants could create problems to solve on the fly.

Sources: Creighton (2005); Rojas (2012)



# Meeting Techniques

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The above toolkit is not an exhaustive list of the techniques that are available for facilitating community workshops and visioning discussions. The techniques above were specifically highlighted because they are inclusive of diverse people of different ages, backgrounds, and cultures. Many of these techniques can be implemented even when participants have little or no English speaking capabilities by using visual and physical communication rather than spoken or written communication. Communities that have utilized visual participatory techniques such as James Rojas' Place It visioning game have still been able to express much specificity about the location, timing, and character of the vision that they hold for their community (Perez 2012). Finally, most of the techniques above can be adapted based on the specific needs and issue areas that are identified during the open houses, listening sessions, and study circles.

Results from the workshops will be publicized via multiple outlets, including the media, word of mouth, and the internet. Names and contact information of participants will be tracked, and efforts will be made to keep participants engaged as the process moves into its final phases of action planning and consensus building.

From the workshops, we hope to gain enough information to allow a vision statement, goals, objectives, and strategies to be drafted by the Executive Committee. While this strategy does bring decision making to a higher organizational level, our experience has been that this is effective when the base of knowledge gained through previous participation and engagement efforts is broad and representative of the diversity in the population as a whole. A smaller decision making body is required in order to reconcile any strategic compromises between competing interests that may be reflected in the feedback from engagement efforts to date. The draft vision statement does not constitute a final document, and additional action planning and consensus building will take place before the final document is adopted.

## Workshop Results

The thematic workshops will help our team to achieve many of the goals of the Envision North St. Paul planning process. First, the flexibility of the thematic workshops allows our team to select topics that come from the community during open houses, listening sessions, and study circles. This empowers participants in the process because they get to utilize their expert local knowledge to dictate the topics for further exploration during the workshops. We expect this tactic to build excitement about the process as participants learn that the topics they generated have been selected for workshops. It also builds trust between participants and the city, helping to establish long-standing relationships that will lead to high levels of engagement over time.

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# Meeting Techniques

## Consensus Building Meetings

After a draft vision has been completed by the Executive Committee, it will be necessary to circle back with participants to gain their approval for the future direction of North St. Paul. Typically, an open house will be held to solicit feedback, and the city council will vote to adopt the vision. Our approach goes much further than this to proactively seek the consensus of a representative sample of the community on key components of the draft vision.

According to Innes (1996), consensus building is a set of group deliberation techniques which attempts to reconcile differences between stakeholders with differing views. Consensus building requires that participants be knowledgeable of the various issues and of the wide range of views held by others. Therefore, the Executive Committee will carefully select a group of participants based primarily on two criteria:

1. The representatives hold a diversity of views which reflect differences of opinion identified in the planning process to date.
2. The representatives have been involved in the planning process, which gives them a broad understanding of the various components of the community's emerging vision, as well as an understanding of different points of view.

While it is not possible to say at this point in time exactly who would be part of the consensus building process, there are several groups of people who should be considered:

- Trusted Advocates, because they represent the viewpoints of historically underrepresented North St. Paul residents
- Study Circle participants, because they have shown a commitment to learning about the issues and struggling to craft key components of the vision
- Community leaders from non-profits, schools, the city, businesses, and other organizations that represent broader interests of the community. Ideally, these participants would have been previously engaged in the process.



# Meeting Techniques

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## **Consensus Building Meetings Continued**

Consensus building adds to community capacity, and reflects the public interest. First, it often leads to the identification of additional stakeholders who had not previously been part of the discussion, possibly because participants tend to be well connected to the broader community and can easily identify others that need to be included (Innes 1996). This brings new resources into the fold, exposing more interests that have been previously underrepresented, and building new connections between individuals and organizations. Consensus building also leads to better informed participants, who are better able to understand the dynamics of the community and utilize that understanding to solve problems (Innes 1996). Finally, Innes (1996) finds that consensus building techniques led to significant agreements on major issues, policies, or plans that had previously been divisive. This is perhaps the most significant finding regarding consensus building because it shows that it can approximate the public interest by building consensus agreement between stakeholders that are representative of the broader community (Innes 1996). The relationships formed and strengthened during the consensus building process will be built upon trust and mutual understanding between people who may tend to disagree with one another at times. We believe this will foster long-lasting engagement within the North St. Paul community.

## **Results of Consensus Building**

The results of the consensus building process will inform revisions to the final draft of the vision statement document by the Executive Committee and consultant team. The final vision statement can be approved and adopted on its own. However, we find that additional action planning within particularly engaged groups of residents can help establish ongoing engagement in the implementation and monitoring of the vision. For this reason, the final plan can be brought back to study circles, non-profits, advocacy groups, and other organizations that have been particularly involved in the process so that they can identify specific actions that can be implemented without the city's help in order to move the community closer to the vision. The city may opt to hold facilitated action planning sessions with the study circles, as those groups have committed to an action orientation already. Ideally, these action plans would be adopted by the city council as addenda to the vision statement itself, thus formalizing a commitment for the community to remain engaged over the long run and generating transparency and trust between the community and the city.

## Pre-Planning

The pre-planning phase of this engagement strategy will involve the creation of an informative website which will be used to communicate with stakeholders as well as outline the goals of the Envision North St. Paul process. The City of North St. Paul will be responsible for creating, initiating, and updating this important community resource. Additional benefits of this web page and the timing of its creation include round the clock accessibility, anonymity, as well as the fact that the webpage will provide a presence of authenticity for stakeholders who may be new to public participation and engagement. At this early stage features on the Envision North St. Paul website will include the goals of the process, a timeline of future events, information on those involved from the City and the Consulting firm. Therefore, as a point of departure this website will detail the visioning framework and will act as the first point of contact with the stakeholders of North St. Paul.

Another feature of this website will be to advertise the presence of various social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, to be utilized by the City of North St. Paul during this engagement and envisioning process. Postings and other communications will occur on a bi-weekly basis throughout the duration of the entire Envision North St. Paul process. This consistency is essential to keeping stakeholders sufficiently informed and also keeping them engaged and involved in the development of a new community vision and direction.

## Phase I: Stakeholder Identification and Open Houses

Phase I of the Envision North St. Paul process includes stakeholder identification and analysis and open houses. This will occur over the first two months of the twelve month project timeline. Through the utilization of local contacts at workforce centers, local school, food shelves and other affiliated non-profit organizations, the City of North St. Paul along with their consultants will work to reach out to community leaders and encourage their engagement in the visioning process. These relationships have the added benefit of capitalizing on the established connections and networks possessed by these leaders and stakeholders. As individual stakeholders and important community leaders are identified they will be continually assessed and evaluated using Bryson's stakeholder analysis toolkit to assess the changing social dynamics present within the community. Once these stakeholders begin to be identified the formation of an Executive and Community Advisory committee can occur.



# Work Program

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## *Stakeholder Identification*

Meeting 1: Consultants will brainstorm with city staff and officials to create an initial list of community contacts to engage in stakeholder analysis. We will seek to engage leaders who are well-connected and leaders within their respective organizations. Tapping into these individuals will leverage their broad connections and influence within the community to give us a better chance of identifying even underrepresented groups.

Meeting 2: Consultants will lead a brainstorming session with community leaders identified in meeting 1 to identify as comprehensive a list as possible of the organizations and interests that exist in the community. No categorization will be completed at this point. After this meeting, consultants will work to research the organizations and interests identified during the meeting, and will begin establishing a database of contact information to be used in future outreach and communications.

Meeting 3: Consultants will work with a select group of community leaders to categorize the list of interests identified in Meeting 2 into a Power Versus Interest Grid. A small and trusted group is necessary in order to avoid conflict and hurt feelings as interest groups are placed into categories based on their levels of power and interest in the community. After this meeting, consultants will work vigorously to begin soliciting applicants for the trusted advocate program by connecting with interest groups which have been identified as having a low level of power in the planning process. Consultants will also begin working with city staff to solicit applications for the Executive Committee and Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The application for trusted advocate positions will include an opportunity to indicate whether or not the trusted advocate would be interested in serving on the Executive Committee or CAC.

Meeting 4: Consultants will meet with city staff and officials to make final recommendations regarding the composition of the Executive Committee, Community Advisory Committee, and trusted advocates. The city will confirm selections for each group, and the consultant team will work with city staff after the meeting to assemble the two committees and trusted advocates.

Note: As we work to establish relationships with interest groups and individuals during the stakeholder identification process, we will begin to identify opportunities for the formation of study circles, listening sessions, and workshops. We will be prepared with informational materials about how individuals and organizations can become involved in each of these engagement opportunities.

## *Open Houses*

Also a key component of Phase I will be a series of four open houses intended to commence community engagement while simultaneously additional stakeholders are being continually identified. These open houses are discussed in detail within this proposal but it remains important to remember the fact that these informational gatherings will occur at varied times and locations, will have local food and beverages available, provide child care options, and will make use of translators and additional language services when appropriate. Also, this is an ideal time to employ the selected social media platforms and information about this series of open houses will be communicated via both the official webpage and through Facebook and Twitter as well. Postings on these platforms will occur before and after each individual open house as a means of recapitulating recent developments and incorporating those who did not attend.

The overarching purpose of these open houses will be to inform stakeholders about the Envision North St. Paul process, answer questions as they arise, provide an opportunity for general feedback, and encourage continued engagement. Here, connections made during the stakeholder identification process will be utilized effectively to continually encourage the incorporation of new stakeholders and underrepresented groups in these community planning efforts. At this point, recruiting will begin for the trusted advocates program committees as these individuals will play a crucial role when moving forward to Phase II and beyond.

## **Phase II: Trusted Advocates, Training, and Committee Establishment**

Phase II, running from month 3 will feature the hiring and training of trusted advocates as well as the establishment of formal and informal committees.

### *Trusted Advocates*

Once selected, each advocate will spend three consecutive months doing community outreach and one-on-one and small group meetings with stakeholders at locations throughout North St. Paul. As a result, we will have to start training trusted advocates immediately. This will allow us to guide trusted advocates in best practices in community organizing, while giving us the opportunity to establish relationships and lines of communications with them. Training sessions will take place regularly over the course of month 3, led by consultants. These sessions will be interactive, allowing trusted advocates and consultants to start discussing outreach efforts and evaluating progress together as the process gets started.



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## *Study Circles*

Study circles allow us to set up informal, action-oriented committees within individual communities. These groups will be focused on specific issues or opportunities identified early in the process by stakeholders and trusted advocates. Trusted advocates will be encouraged to set up study circles within their communities, or to use alternative engagement methods if study circles are not appropriate. We will work with the trusted advocates and stakeholders to build study circle rosters and communication pathways during month 3. A schedule of study circle meetings will be established during this time, including approximately 2-3 meetings for each study circle formed.

One of the strongest features of this phase is that much of it will be determined by what is learned and observed during Phase I. By structuring the process in this manner, the stakeholders themselves are able to determine the course of the visioning process from the very beginning and by empowering the community early on stakeholders will likely remain engaged as their individual and collective impacts will be immediately observed. At this point, the documentation of procedural updates via multi-media outreach will be completed by the consultant group and a means of remaining in touch with the dynamic engagement process.

## *Committees*

The formal committees included in this process are the Executive Committee and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The Executive Committee is the decision-making body which governs the Envision North St. Paul process. This committee is limited by the CAC, which is responsible for approving the agenda for each Executive Committee meeting. Consultants will work with each of these committees during month 3, meeting 2-3 times in order to establish ground rules, roles and responsibilities, and lines of communication. Both the Executive Committee and CAC will meet on a regular basis throughout the Envision North St. Paul process. This may require monthly meetings at some points, and during busy phases of the process may require a meeting every two weeks. All deliverable reports will be provided to the committees as soon as they are available, and will be posted online as soon as they are approved by the Executive Committee.



## Phase III: Study Circles, Listening Sessions, and Thematic Workshops

Phase III will include study circle meetings, listening sessions, and thematic visioning workshops in months 4 to 7. Again, much of what is accomplished in Phase III will be directly drawn from the insights gained in Phase II.

### *Study Circle Meetings*

Where possible, consultants will hire neutral, third party facilitators to lead study circle meetings during this month. Given the number of meetings required, this may be necessary. If skilled volunteer facilitators are identified within the community, we can train them to facilitate study circles on their own in order to cut costs. A designated note-taker will be responsible for providing updates to the consultant team after each meeting. Comments will be recorded and posted online or in other media as necessary. Note that study circles do not have to stop meeting after month 4. They are encouraged to meet throughout the visioning process to ensure the inclusion of their visions in the final plan.

**Deliverable 1:** The result of study circles will be action-oriented mini plans aimed at moving specific communities forward in addressing key issues.

### *Listening Sessions*

The Listening Sessions will occur during months 4 and 5 and these meetings will be consultant moderated with support from trusted advocates. Like the open houses in Phase I these listening sessions will be held at community locations that are accessible to diverse stakeholders. Stakeholders at these meetings will be the primary speakers and meeting facilitators will provide prompts when necessary. The consultants present will gather information and create a summary of the comments presented. These summaries will be shared online and via other media consistent with the communications strategy.

**Deliverable 2:** A SWOT-type analysis will be generated based on study circle meetings and listening sessions to inform the topics and methods chosen for thematic workshops.

**Deliverable 3:** State of the Community Report, based on consultant analysis of data and existing community conditions.

### *Thematic Visioning Workshops*

These workshops will be held during months 6-7 and will address topics recommended by the consultant team as determined by the Executive Committee based on Deliverables 2 and 3. Workshops will use a variety of information gathering and interactive exercises to explore issues and identify stakeholder priorities. The approach will be solution-oriented, leveraging community knowledge to produce visions around topics and issues identified in previous efforts. The workshops will be led by facilitators hired by consultants.

**Deliverable 4:** A database of comments from workshops and other community meetings, categorized by consultants to aid in the formulation of a vision document.

# Work Program

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## Phase IV: Vision Creation, Consensus Building, and Adoption

At the conclusion of Phase III Phase IV will commence. During months 9 to 12 information from all previous efforts will be compiled and synthesized to inform the final course of action and direction of the community plan. Objectives include the production of an Executive Committee-approved vision draft (month 8), open houses to gather feedback on the draft vision (month 9), consensus building with key stakeholder groups (month 10), community action planning (month 11), and ultimately plan approval (month 12). Key points pertaining to this phase include:

### *Draft Vision*

The consultant team will work vigorously during month 8 to analyze deliverables 1-4, along with feedback from the Executive Committee and CAC in order to craft a draft vision statement document, including goals, objectives, and strategies. The consultants will review the draft vision document with both the CAC and the Executive Committee, and will seek consensus approval of the draft vision by both committees. Ultimately, the Executive Committee will approve the draft vision by a vote in order to resolve any items that may require compromise.

### Deliverable 5: Draft Vision Statement

### *Open Houses for Feedback*

While they are not an ideal forum for engaging diverse populations, 4-6 open houses will be held during month 9 in order to provide a broad opportunity for feedback and to allow the consultant team time to organize consensus building and action planning meetings with key stakeholder groups during months 10 and 11. The format of these open houses will be similar to previous open houses.

### *Consensus Building*

Stakeholders for consensus building will be selected by the Executive Committee with recommendations coming from the consultants and the CAC. Stakeholders must represent a broad cross-section of the community, discussed earlier in this report. Approximately 3-4 consensus building meetings will take place with the group of stakeholders identified, and each meeting will be moderated by a trained, third party facilitator who is skilled in consensus techniques. Modifications to the draft vision required in order to reach consensus will be noted by the consultant team and relayed to the Executive Committee and Community Advisory Committee. The Executive Committee will meet at the end of month 10 to approve a second draft of the vision statement.



## *Community Action Planning*

Community Action Planning is an optional and supplemental component of the proposed Envision North St. Paul process. It will provide an opportunity for study circles and other key community groups to develop their own action strategies for achieving the vision crafted during this process. Action planning can take place either before or after the approval and adoption of the vision. However, completing action planning before approval and adoption allows for the opportunity to include community action plans as addenda to the adopted document. This is an opportunity to establish trust and put into place low-cost mechanisms for monitoring and implementing the vision.

## *Approval and Adoption*

The final approval and adoption of the plan will take place at the end of month 12, after the consultant team has been able to incorporate any necessary changes to accommodate action planning and the results of consensus building activities. The Executive Committee will vote to send the finalized document to the City Council for adoption.

## Deliverable 6: Adopted Vision Statement

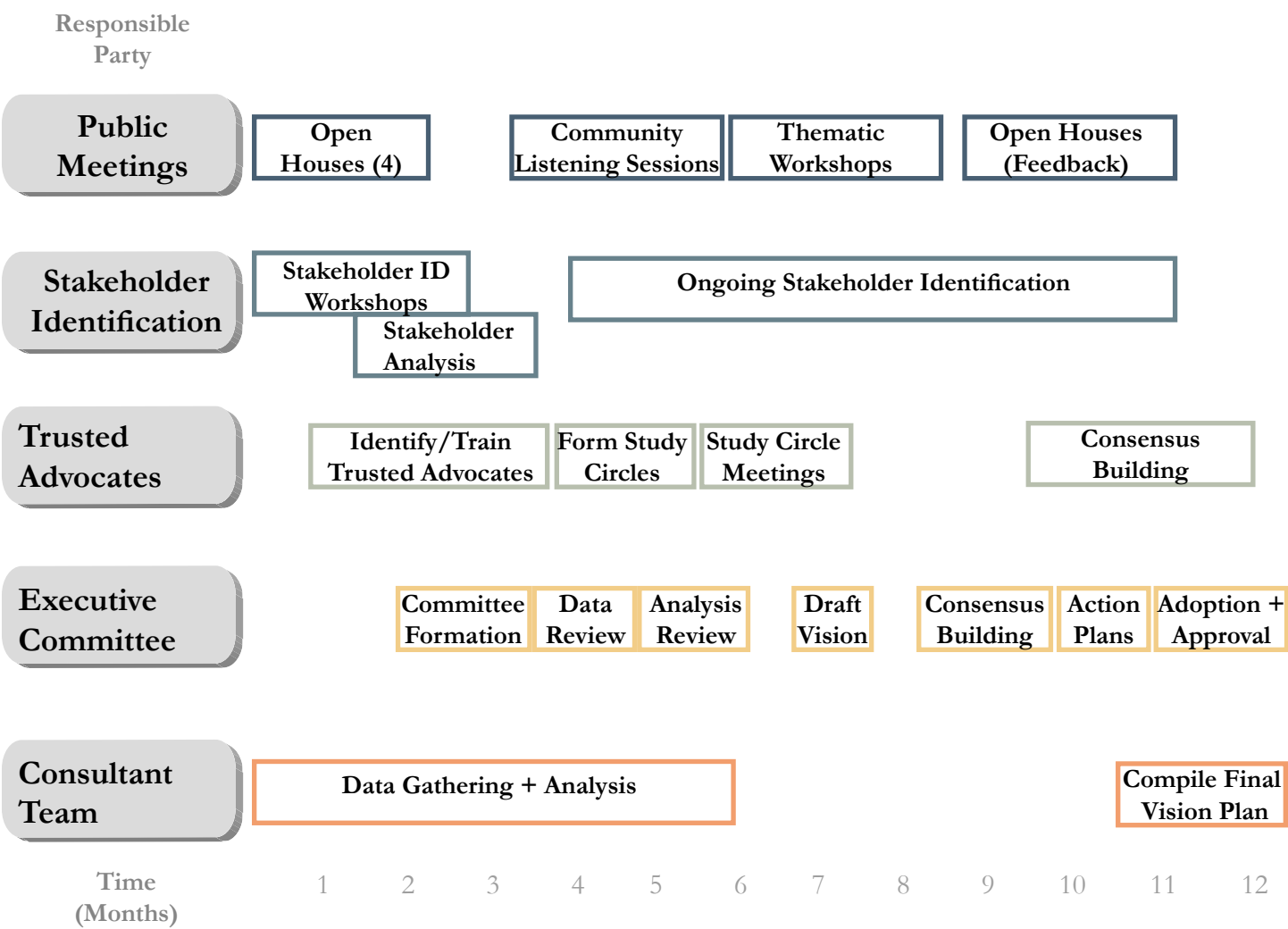
## **Phase V: Monitoring and Implementation**

The fifth and final phase revolves around implementation and evaluation of the finalized plan. While this is designed to be an on-going process key attributes of the stage are developing evaluation tools, receiving and analyzing stakeholder feedback, maintaining functional social media accounts, and continually utilizing study circles to address issues voiced by the community. When possible trusted advocates, committee members, consultants, and City employees should remain in contact with one another and social gatherings could be organized at local parks and businesses to encourage this behavior. Additionally, reconvening the Executive Committee on an annual basis to assess performance relating to vision statement goals, objectives, and strategies will be essential. Further, this committee should make available to the community progress reports via the social media outlets, the program webpage, and hard copies shall be distributed to trusted advocates and all committee members. This proposed work program is depicted in a detailed infographic on the following page. [Figure 8]



# Work Program

Figure 8: Work Program Infographic



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